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SHOULD OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM INCLUDE ACTIVITIES WHOSE SPECIAL PURPOSE IS PREP- ARATION FOR WAR?

BY

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UL 14 1915

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT
OF SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE NATIONAL EDUCA-
TION ASSOCIATION AT CINCINNATI, OHIO,
FEBRUARY 24, 1915

SHOULD OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM INCLUDE ACTIVITIES WHOSE SPECIAL PURPOSE IS PREPARATION FOR WAR?

If by "our educational system" you mean our elementary and secondary schools through which a republic is consciously, sacrificially trying to give her eighteen million children each year tuition of a longing that in its very transmission becomes a prophecy; an institution whose very maintenance is a prayer uttered by one generation through a thousand hours of every year for all that "it could never be"; an institution in which the future takes counsel of all the race hope and human failure of the past;

And if you mean by "war" that hellish thing which is now going on in Europe, that vocation of jealousy, envy and hate, pursued with every skill that the human mind and hand have learned, with every passion that the brute has bequeathed, but exposing incidentally every virtue that a god knows; —

If you mean by "our educational system" that which attempts to express what we most want to keep, out of all human experience in the eternity back of us, and what we most desire to hand on to those who are to live in the eternity before us — some haunting memory of the Creator's purpose for man, some stirring strain that drives us, leads us on, that "harries man to love the best";

And if you mean by "war" that which drags one man back to the savage even while it lets the divinity in another find its exalted eternal expression, that which is strewing with stark and rotting corpses fields already twice red with the carnage of Caesar and Napoleon, that which, as in the days of Jeremiah, has "taken away the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the candle"; —

If you mean by "our educational system" not merely curriculums and budgets and licenses and pensions, and miserable lonesome rural schools and beautiful urban structures, but the visible, organized, disciplined aspiration of a race moving toward some higher goal;

And if you mean by “war” that which is pictured in the recent report in the Alumni Weekly of a Yale man, fresh from the trenches in the north of France: “Then the machine guns opened on them witheringly, they were falling in hundreds, but on they pressed (in dense ranks). They came nearer and the British could hear them singing ‘The Watch on the Rhine’ — thousands of voices, while hundreds carried the air on mouth organs. They were getting close. It was time for musketry. The English observed that only half of the approaching mass wore uniforms. ‘Shoot low,’ commanded the English officer, ‘they are only boys; aim at their legs.’ . . . Only a few reached the trenches”;

If you mean by “our educational system” the “substance of things hoped for” in a democracy’s highest faith; and if you mean by “war” that sublimated brutish game played under international rules, whose issue is absurdly assumed to determine relative values of civilizations; that greatest tragedy which would be the greatest comedy if it were not tragedy — then I answer “No!” “Our educational system” in its basic nationwide disciplines, in its earthwide racial heritages and in its vocational courses, should *not* include those whose special purpose is preparation for “war.” No, by all our hopes for the millions of children of all nations, whose ancestral hates we seek to quiet or quench, whose parents unite in taxing themselves for the support of the schools which we represent here tonight. No, by all the innocent sufferings and blightings of the millions of the “gory nurse’s” children whose fathers and brothers are facing each other on hundreds of miles of entrenched borders this same night. No, as many times as there are children, here and there.

But if, holding to the definition I have made of “our educational system” (keeping its fences open only on the infinite side), you will let me define “war,” I am ready to answer “Yes,” — yes, by all the lives that without hate have been nobly given for the love of something higher than one’s self; yes, by the “adorable faith” of the soldier who from being a mercenary, a paid slaughterer, in time became a patriot and a martyr; yes, by all the suffering and struggle and victory of human evolution from beasthood to manhood.

If you will let me define “war”! And I begin my definition,

as is the custom of the lexicographer, with the derivation, the etymology. My definition of war will stand on my definition of militarism, and my definition of militarism goes back through the Roman *milites*, helmeted and bespeared, massed in legions or formed in testudines, back to the slopes of Kabulstan and the plains of the Jumna and the Ganges, to the places of the mother language, the Indo-Germanic, to the Sanskrit word “*mil*” which signified to associate, to unite — back to the primeval soldiers, those who joined one another to achieve some common object. And, as the most usual common purpose was to attack, or to defend themselves against other human beings, so it came about that in many languages, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Old High German and Middle Dutch, the word in which they spoke this common object (“guerre,” “werra”), had the sound of the wings of the followers of Apollyon, which John heard in the Apocalypse, “the sound of chariots, and of many horses rushing to war.”

I am a militarist in this pristine ancient Aryan sense. And I build my martial system on the same foundation as that which all European languages of militarism remember — the assembling, the organizing of individual men into *milites*, militia.

It is of such a militarism that Kipling sings: a militarism not primarily of individual valor but of miracles of organization, a militarism in which, as Chesterton says, there is no “epicurean corner,” no “place of irresponsibility,” a militarism which calls into specific sacrificial service what each man has to give even if it takes him away from his personal prospects, or his personal gain, or takes from him his life.

On my way to France from England just after the declaration of war in Europe last summer, I journeyed in a compartment from London to the Channel with six or seven Frenchmen and a Russian who had left their occupations and families to join their comrades, each in his appointed place. One was a maker of meerschaum pipes, proud of his skill, but going unquestioningly and without a word of comment or complaint except the hope that “it would not come to bayonets.” At that same time, Doctor Carrel, who had but a little time ago received the Nobel Prize, and who had made the heart to beat long after the death of its owner, was going to hos-

pital service in the south of France. And down in Austria there was a musician, Fritz Kreisler, the violinist, (whom I heard last Saturday night), joining his regiment, later rescued insensible from a trench, where he had been ridden down by the Cossacks, and even now lame from the spear-thrust. These all tell of a martial organization which, in its provident thought, had a definite place alike for the meerschaum-pipe maker, the world-famed surgeon, and the composer of the "Caprice," and which, if you could make your way to the German trenches, would reveal a provision for every martial need or emergency, and comfort even, only less than omniscient. (One of my former students who has just returned from there, tells of officers in the field, in the lull of battle, listening by field telephones to music in Berlin.)

Such a militant organization and with it a specific prediscipline, a preparatory training! (And preparation for war is war, even as preparation for life is life.) I think I am almost ready now for the landwehr and a landsturm, a continuation school in which each man shall, apart from his vocation, or quitting even for a time his vocation — as every able-bodied man of France, Germany, Austria, Italy — undergo physical, mental, disciplines for the sake of the State, for the sake of the race.

Five years ago, after reading William James's essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War," I wrote him that I was prepared to recruit a regiment of volunteers for his army, which, he urged, should be conscripted. Perhaps you recall that most stirring of martial documents, put out as peace propaganda, in which he advocates the conscription of the luxurious classes to be sent to the coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets, to dish washing, clothes washing and window washing, to road building and tunnel building, to foundries and stoke-holes, to the frames of sky scrapers, in order that they might know "the sour and hard foundations of the higher life," and feel that they belonged to a collectivity superior in some ideal aspect to themselves, something for which they were ready to pay a blood-tax. I was not ready then for conscription, having memory of an experience as a boy in seeing citizens in this very valley work out poll taxes on the roads. But when I see the miracles wrought by martial organization, I am impatient at times that we have to wait for the conscription of our individual ideals.

When journeying through a pass in the Jura mountains a few years ago one March day, I saw silhouetted against the cold evening sky, the figures of soldiers climbing along a ridge to their fortress at the end of a day's marching or scouting. In Florence I saw troop after troop crossing and recrossing the Arno to and from the hill of San Miniato where Angelo's David looks across the city to the Apennines. At Siena I was waked by the tramp of soldiers' feet. In the place of the Caesars I saw crowds held in by lines of soldiers, while kings from north and south passed. Everywhere soldiers, and always was rising this thought, "If these men, compelled to military service"—useless as it seemed to be then except in its disciplines—"if they could only be trained and employed to fight against the *real* foes of a city, a nation, a race, what a power would be released for the general good!"

And here my definition of war emerges upon battlefields of promethean yet newest heroisms (if indeed there are such places as battlefields to be left to history). Even while I was making this definition in that recurring thought which came to me in Italy and France, someone, I have learned only within the last few days, was at that very time framing a like definition in Russia:

"Our awfulest enemies, the elements and germs and insect destroyers, attack us every minute without cease, yet we murder one another as if we were out of our senses. Death is ever on the watch for us, and we think of nothing but to snatch a few patches of land! About 5,000,000,000 days of work go every year to the displacement of boundary lines. Think of what humanity could obtain if that prodigious effort were devoted to fighting our real enemies, the noxious species and our hostile environment. We should conquer them in a few years. The entire globe would turn into a model farm. Every plant would grow for our use. The savage animals would disappear, and the infinitely tiny animals would be reduced to impotence by hygiene and cleanliness. The earth would be conducted according to our convenience. In short, the day men realize who their worst enemies are, they will form an alliance against them, they will cease to murder one another like wild beasts from sheer folly. Then they will be the true rulers of the planet, the lords of creation."

But I have found a more recent and effective statement of the thought that was flung across the sky of many an earth mind by the Philosopher James before he went away, the thought that

troubled me whenever I heard the measured tramp of feet or saw the bayonet in France or Italy, the thought that at the same time was stirring this Russian, unknown to me, to cry against the war philosophies of Gumplowitz, something that has at last got from the philosopher's study into the street — even as the philosophies of the European professors have reached the triggers of the peasants' rifles and made men different from all other animals, in that they prey upon their own species.

"But where does the martial spirit come in" — says the cynic. And the American philosopher, after James's own spirit, replies: "The Nation has never made us look at it in the right way." There is nothing "animating about wallowing in a trench or luggering a haversack and a heavy gun all day, except as it is a part of an organized national enterprise." — "Well, then, organize your national enterprise against nature instead of the Belgians or Canadians." As it has been since the Titans fought the gods, "Nature is our implacable enemy. Russians aren't, Germans aren't."

We have too much softened our vocabulary and our spirits. We speak of "public service" and of "doing good" when we ought to be making such war, fighting evil and enduring hardships. We ought, as some old militant Christian said, to put on our armor and not take it off till we put on our shrouds. For life is not service. Life is struggle alone, struggle together. Life is war.

I discovered when following the Mississippi river to the Gulf a few years ago, that it was the War Department that was watching its every movement, that was carrying on constant battle with floods, shoals, erosions, burrowing animals and the clouds which every year send the army of waters down the valley with the power of 60,000,000 horses. It is the War Department that has dug the Panama Canal, that has made some regions accessible, that has made others habitable, that has stayed pestilence and ministered most effectively to cities overwhelmed by disaster. It is to the War Department that we turn in our extreme emergencies — flood, fire, famine and earthquake. It is the War Department that is illustrating how we may fight our real and common race foes.

And I would have the conservation of health and the direction of education conceived of as functions of the War Department, scientifically, austereley administered for the common good. Kitchener's letter to the expeditionary force going into France is the best possible literature for us to use who are directing the expeditionary forces which this generation is sending to battle in the thirties and forties and fifties of this century. Here is a meeting of the general staff, Generals Maxwell and Schaeffer, Claxton and Flagg-Young, Jordan and Snyder, who must largely determine their far movements. Would we might commandeer every luxury, every degenerate habit, every extravagant whim, every waste, to support this army. Would we might use one slice of bread for our sandwich instead of two slices if we could thereby make them fight more effectively against ignorance, disease, intemperance, incompetence, sloth, passion, and fight for those things without which human existence were a colossal jest. Till we have taxed ourselves for schools as Europe is taxing herself for wars, we shall not have done too much.

But if you say that this is all Utopian, and that without war, as it is illustrated in the trenches and on the mine-spread seas we can not preserve or foster that priceless spirit of courage, honor, disinterestedness, contempt of life, I would point to the soldier, Colonel Goethals, who has divided the continent, and the soldier, Colonel Gorgas, who kept away the hostile diseases while this Hercules was at work; I would point to Pasteur, who dragged around with him a half-paralyzed body for twenty years and more, fighting microbes, when he might have been living in Horatian ease; I would point to the martial geologist Van Hise, to the martial sanitarian General Wood, to the martial peacemaker Jane Addams. I could, in protesting proof, point to thousands, all the way from the invincible endurer Prometheus who gave fire to men, to that gentle fighter, Richard Watson Gilder, who wrote this for me not long before his death:

' Twas said: " When roll of drum and battle's roar
Shall cease upon the earth, Oh, then no more

" The deed, the race, of heroes in the land."

But scarce that word was breathed when one small hand

Lifted victorious o'er a giant wrong
 That had its victims crushed through ages long;

Some woman set her pale and quivering face,
 Firm as a rock, against a man's disgrace;

A little child suffered in silence lest
 His savage pain should wound a mother's breast;

Some quiet scholar flung his gauntlet down
 And risked, in Truth's great name, the synod's frown;

A civic hero, in the calm realm of laws,
 Did that which suddenly drew a world's applause;

And one to the pest his lithe young body gave
 That he a thousand thousand lives might save.

I am not so unpractical as not to know that we shall have to prepare for protection, that for a time we shall have to train some men to shoot other men. I have had that training myself and I approve the temperate and sensible program, so far as I understand it, of such practical anti-militarists as General Wood and President Schurman. But what I do contend for, beyond this, or in spite of this, is that we must not turn our great public school system into recruiting stations or barracks for the idea that war, as illustrated in Belgium, Poland, and Servia, is the supreme expression, or the necessary school, of a nation's valor or of a virile world civilization.

I had come to the end of my address when a morning's cablegram from the edge of the European war brought me the summarizing, prophetic, graphic epilogue of what I have been attempting to say. It may not be true, but it intimates how what I have been saying may come true. The cable is as follows:

BERNE, Feb. 22 (*Dispatch to The London Morning Post*).—“All the young men in Germany between the ages of 17 and 20 who have failed to volunteer for the

army and can not give an adequate excuse are now being called out to serve as an untrained Landsturm. The older boys and girls, with the consent of their parents, are to be employed in farm work this Spring, Summer and Autumn in the East Prussian provinces as well as in Bavaria, for which purpose they will be excused from school attendance."

They are to go to the farms. They too are to fight for their country and in the field; fight for it with the plough and the harrow, the planter and the harvester, the insect exterminator and the fertilizer. And some day all physical war will be as this. The Landsturm of Fear and Envy and Hate will become the Landsturm of disciplined, scientific, aspiring, industrial and invincible struggle for man's supremacy over earth, sea, sky and self!

With *that* definition of "war," I am ready to say that the schools should, *must* prepare for it, body, mind and soul.

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